



EPISODE 2x05: “MONSTERS”

Written by Katie Fiorino and Matt Engstrom

Directed by Matt Engstrom

Selected scenes culled from the “SERENITY” Movie Shooting Script by Joss Whedon

www.stillflying.net

Head Writer & Executive Producer: George W. Krubski

Producers: Matt Engstrom & David Elmer

Art Director: Sean Young

Casting Director: Katie Fiorino

Disclaimer: The crew of the Serenity, the 'Verse in which they live, and their fellow inhabitants are the property of Joss Whedon, Universal Studios, and/or Fox Television. They are used in this work of fan fiction with love and respect, but without permission.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – SALOON – DAY

Three horses are tied outside the saloon. TWO MEN, hard and rough looking, stand near the horses. They stop talking and watch as CLINT, a young gangly rancher with mud on his boots, walks up the steps and through the swinging saloon doors.

INT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – SALOON

As he enters, Clint's eyes flicker briefly towards the sole patrons of the bar, LI CHEN, an Asian man in his thirties, and PATIENCE, a worn but rough woman in her sixties. Walking past them, Clint takes a seat at the bar.

CLINT

Sake.

The BARTENDER smiles and pours Clint his drink. Clint nods his thanks and takes a healthy sip. He looks back to Li Chen and Patience, listening in.

PATIENCE

... I got half of this here moon under my fingernails, Chen. There's a reason they ain't manicured. 'S hard work. No one else can make you this offer.

LI CHEN

I'm sorry, Patience. I'm gonna have to decline.

Clint smiles and finishes the drink.

PATIENCE

I'm the one that's sorry, Chen. Just trying to help, 's all, and you an' your mining camp need my help. Ain't no denyin' it. Wasn't there just an attack here on livestock a few nights past?

LI CHEN

Probably just wolves.

PATIENCE

(laughs)

Wolves? Hah! You know better.

(leans close)

They're on the move. The taste of livestock won't satisfy 'em. Not for long. I'm offering you and your people my protection. Lowest price I can abide.

LI CHEN
I appreciate your concern, but your price is too high.

PATIENCE
Coin mean that much to you?

Li Chen doesn't answer. Patience stands, putting on her hat.

PATIENCE (cont'd)
I guess so. Hope you don't come to regret it.

She walks out.

Clint, rising from his seat at the bar, walks to Li Chen and takes the seat Patience just vacated.

CLINT
What's that <bloodsucker> doin' in these parts?

LI CHEN
Lookin' for a stake in the mine, like usual. Seems like every month she comes out here with a new offer. Alliance stamped protein bars. Horses. One time, she tried to pawn off a genuine diamond necklace for Ming Yu, like an eight-year-old would have any use for somethin' so fancy. That was the most pathetic of 'em. An' this time she comes offerin' to... well, I s'pose you heard.

CLINT
Yeah.
(beat)
There's talk among some of the other ranchers that you'd take her offer this time. Lots of 'em want ya to. Not me, of course. I can't stand the thought of that woman stickin' her <witch-wart> nose in our business. But...

LI CHEN
Don't you worry none. We don't need her help. Got a man comin'. A Browncoat. Was a sergeant in the war. He'll be landin' t'morrow with enough weapons for all 'a my miners an' all you ranch folk nearby. We'll look out for each other.

CLINT
We always do.
(beat)
'Sides, like you said, it's probably just wolves causin' all the ruckus, like always.

They clink glasses. Clint finishes his drink while Li Chen reaches into a bag under the table. He takes out a bulky OBJECT that appears to be a cross between binoculars and a flashlight.

LI CHEN

Was going to drop this off at your place, but since you're here.

(turns it on; it glows violet)

Heat scanner. We use them in the mines to find veins. Should help you see the wolves 'fore they see you.

CLINT

Thanks, Li.

LI CHEN

Think nothin' of it.

CLINT

Well, I best be off. Me an' Trusty are gonna be sleepin' with the cattle tonight, keepin' watch and such. It's gonna be a long night.

LI CHEN

Be careful, Clint.

CLINT

Yeah, Li. You too. Give Ming Yu a peck on the cheek for me when ya' tuck 'er in.

The two shake hands. Clint picks up the heat scanner, flips a coin at the bartender, and exits.

EXT. WHITEFALL – CLINT'S RANCH – SUNSET – EST.

Clint walks up a dirt path towards a small, dusty ranch house, surrounded by fields filled with CATTLE. A dog (TRUSTY) laying on the porch jumps up and runs to Clint, wagging its tail and barking happily.

EXT. WHITEFALL – CLINT'S RANCH – NIGHT

Clint sits on a chair near the edge of the field behind the ranch house. He plays a MOURNFUL TUNE on his harmonica. Trusty sits next to him. The heat scanner hangs on the chair, and a crude rifle lies across his lap. An open BOTTLE rests near one of his boots.

Cattle graze nearby. The trees of the adjacent woods sway in the breeze. Shadows play and dance with the flickering fire.

From the woods, a twig SNAPS.

Trusty raises his head, listening.

EXT. WHITEFALL – CLINT’S RANCH – TREELINE POV

Something watches Clint from the woods, BREATHING HEAVY. A second twig SNAPS, followed by a RUSTLE of leaves.

EXT. WHITEFALL – CLINT’S RANCH

Trusty GROWLS.

Clint stops playing his harmonica. Leans over and takes a swig of sake.

CLINT
You hear somethin’, boy?

The cattle begin to GROAN. They are frightened. Hidden amidst the noises of the cattle, a FAINT INHUMAN CRY is heard. The cattle begin to scatter.

Trusty jumps to his feet, GROWLING towards the woods. Clint rises from the chair, rifle in one hand and the heat scanner in the other. Trusty BARKS and races towards the woods.

CLINT (cont’d)
Wait, Trusty!

Clint cradles the rifle in his left arm while he fiddles with the controls on the heat scanner. The heat scanner turns on and flickers. He shakes it.

CLINT (cont’d)
Goram it.

The heat scanner stops flickering and emits a constant violet light.

CLINT (cont’d)
Please don’t be them. Please God.

Clint raises the heat scanner to his eyes. Through it, he sees Trusty, a splotch of purple in pitch black, but nothing else. Clint turns left and then right, scanning the area, but all that registers is Trusty and the cows. He lowers the heat scanner, eyes narrowing as he looks into the darkness.

Trusty BARKS and SNARLS, then SQUEALS. The night grows silent.

CLINT (cont'd)

Trusty!

(beat)

Trusty! Trusty! You hearin' me?

Clint fumbles, raising both the rifle and the heat scanner back to his eyes. He looks right and then left, but sees nothing. Clint lowers his rifle.

The sound of SNARLING and GNASHING floats through the air. Something WHISTLES out of the black towards him. A knife sinks into his right shoulder.

Clint stumbles back and falls down into the dust. The rifle drops from his grip.

He looks at the handle of the knife. It's laden with spikes.

Clint drops the heat scanner down and pulls the knife out of his shoulder. The blood-streaked blade is crude and of a curved, wicked shape.

CLINT

No! Not them!

EXT. WHITEFALL – CLINT'S RANCH – TREELINE POV

Something rushes out of the woods towards the injured and bleeding Clint.

EXT. WHITEFALL – CLINT'S RANCH

Clint snatches up the heat scanner and puts it back to his eyes. He sees FIVE SHAPES running towards him. He drops the heat scanner and reaches for the rifle.

CLINT

Please God, no!

The noise of THUDDING footsteps and inhuman SHRIEKING grows louder. Clint fires his rifle just once, then SCREAMS.



Act One

EXT. SERENITY – ORBITING ABOVE WHITEFALL

Serenity enters Whitefall's atmosphere.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY

JAYNE sits on a crate, a simple-looking RIFLE in hand. KAYLEE sit next to him, packing a dozen or so similar rifles from a pile at Jayne's feet into a crate. Serenity rattles around them as the ship fights through atmo.

KAYLEE

You 'bout done with that one yet?

JAYNE

Just hold your wad, girl. This here's a Mao-Tse-Tung Twenty-Three Hundred. Simple, workin' man's huntin' rifle. Thanks to the Alliance's restrictions on sellin' weapons made for the express purpose of killin' folk, it takes a guy like me to make a Mao-Tse-Tung...

(cocks the weapon)

...a Mao-Tse-Fun.

Kaylee smiles.

KAYLEE

I've been timin' you, Jayne. Last three you slowed down somethin' fierce.

JAYNE

I'm a might distracted, you could say.

(beat)

Reavers're down there.

Kaylee quiets at the thought. She is suddenly very interested in packing her crate. Jayne continues to make modifications to the hunting rifle, using small tools here and there, the rifle CLICKING and CLACKING.

JAYNE (cont'd)

I don't get them. Ain't logical. Cuttin' on themselves, rapin' and murdering – I mean, I'll kill a man in a fair fight... or if I think he's going to start a fair fight, or if he bothers me, or if there's a woman...

Jayne looks at Kaylee, who is busy packing the crates. He spins the rifle in his hands and raises it, checking the sights.

JAYNE (cont'd)

...or I'm gettin' paid – mostly when I'm gettin' paid.

(lowers the rifle)

But these Reavers... last ten years, they show up like the bogeyman from stories. Eating people alive? Where does that get fun?

KAYLEE

Shepherd Book said they was men that reached the edge of space, saw a vast nothingness and just went babbledy over it.

JAYNE

Hell, I been to the edge. Just looked like more space.

He hands the rifle to Kaylee, who places it in the crate.

JAYNE (cont'd)

Don't know what Mal's thinkin', takin' this job.

KAYLEE

We're makin' amends, Jayne. We led them Reavers to Whitefall. They crashed on account'a us.

JAYNE

That don't make 'em our problem.

Jayne stands up and picks up the crate. Kaylee stands, too, and follows him as he walks across the room.

KAYLEE

Maybe the Cap'n feels guilty 'bout bringing them to Whitefall.

JAYNE

Wise man once said there's two things that get a thief kilt – bullets 'n guilt.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Maybe so, but it's not like we ain't getting' paid.

Jayne sets the crate down beside three others and walks out the rear entrance to the cargo bay. At the door, he turns back to Kaylee.

JAYNE

Not near enough.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – CEMETERY – DAY

TWO MEN with spades fill Clint's grave while *Serenity* lands in the background. Fresh wildflowers have been placed near his tombstone.

Near the cemetery stands the local church, its bell-tower the tallest structure in the center of the small town.

EXT. WHITEFALL - K-3 MINING POST - DAY

Serenity's airlock opens. MAL steps down the ramp, flanked by ZOE and Jayne. WASH, Kaylee, SIMON, and RIVER follow. Li Chen waits for them. MING YU, Li Chen's eight-year-old daughter, hovers behind her father.

LI CHEN

Malcolm Reynolds! I sure am glad to see you.

They shake hands.

MAL

Good to see you, Li Chen. Been a while.

LI CHEN

No bullet holes for me to patch up this time?

MAL

Nope. Haven't run into Patience yet. How is the old girl, anyhow?

LI CHEN

Up to no good. Dealin', schemin'. Lookin' to shoot you again, I reckon. What would that be? Third time?

ZOE

Sounds about right.

LI CHEN

Well, I heard about what you did to her the last time you met. Just before...

A beat. The mood darkens for a moment.

MAL

Yeah, well, if she shoots me again I might just choose your healin' hand over the fancy doctor behind me.

LI CHEN

Oh, I think tendin' to your complainin' behind once is enough. The old girl decides to shoot you again, you ain't sleepin' on my couch.

SIMON

I'd say that's fair. You can be a bit of a whiner.

Mal shoots him a look.

SIMON (cont'd)
(to Li Chen)
Has he always been afraid of needles?

LI CHEN
Can't make a straight weave with Mal.

Mal gestures to the others.

MAL
Right... The chatty one's Simon, the doc. You know most of the rest.

Kaylee spots Ming Yu hiding behind her father's leg.

KAYLEE
And who's this?

LI CHEN
That'd be my lil' girl. Ming Yu, how 'bout you be a good girl for daddy an' say hi to these fine folk?

Ming Yu waves.

LI CHEN (cont'd)
She's a bit on the shy side, but she'll warm to you pretty quick. I was hopin' that one of you could look after her while we take care of things.

KAYLEE
What do you say, Ming Yu? We could play tea party or somethin'. Won't that be fun?

RIVER
Like the rainbow the sunshine makes. An illusion, light passing through the tears of weary clouds. Not real, but you see it.

Everyone looks at River. Beat.

MAL
And that's River. The ship's resident... poet.
(beat)
While Zoe, Jayne, and Wash here make a start at assessing the town's defenses an' such, why don't you take me and the doc out to the site of the most recent attack?

LI CHEN
You really want to see it?

MAL
Best we know what we're dealin' with.

LI CHEN
I hope you didn't have a big lunch.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – AFTERNOON

Zoe, Jayne, and Wash ride the HOVERMULE down the Main Street. The hovermule's back is filled with CRATES of modified rifles and magazines of ammunition.

WASH
This town is dead.

JAYNE
Not yet.

WASH
You know what I mean. Nobody's out.

ZOE
They're just afraid, 's all. Waitin' for Death to come
a'knockin' on their doors.

They stop in front of the Saloon. Zoe examines the windows of the Saloon. The BARTENDER steps outside. Zoe looks at him, then gestures towards the windows.

ZOE
Should board up those windows before nightfall.

BARTENDER
Well hello to you, too.
(walks down the steps)
You the crew Li Chen called in?

WASH
The very ones. Very serious we are. We get down to
business. No Tom-foolery here. No hellos. No how-are-
yous.

Zoe gives Wash a look, and he stops and scratches his head.

BARTENDER

I can see that.

(beat)

Board up the windows? I seen what they done to that rancher last night. Reavers come to eat me, a few boards ain't gonna stop them. Best case, they'd use 'em to pick pieces of me outta their teeth.

ZOE

Board them up. It'll slow them down long enough for this to stop them.

She reaches into the crate and passes him a rifle. The bartender catches it and examines it.

BARTENDER

You expect me to kill Reavers with this *luh suh* <garbage> weapon?

JAYNE

Hey! Best watch your mouth.

BARTENDER

Or what? You'll eat me instead?

JAYNE

No. You'll eat my-

ZOE

Jayne!

(to the bartender)

Gun's been modified. Looks like a hunting rifle, but it's fully automatic.

BARTENDER

(to Jayne)

You done this?

(Jayne nods)

When all this nastiness's blown over, drinks are on the house. Whenever you want.

JAYNE

Whenever?

BARTENDER

That's right.

Jayne reaches in another crate and grabs a stack of loaded magazines.

JAYNE

Here!

(passes them to the bartender)

Go nuts.

BARTENDER

They come this way, you can count on it.

ZOE

And see after your neighbors. We don't have much time before nightfall.

They get back on the hovermule.

JAYNE

(to Wash and Zoe)

I like this town.

EXT. WHITEFALL – CLINT'S RANCH – AFTERNOON

Mal, Simon, and Li Chen walk around the field where Clint was killed. Dead cattle lie in the grass, their soft underbellies ripped open. Open wounds mark their legs and necks. Mal sees footprints in the dirt. Some are clearly dog prints.

MAL

(gestures towards the prints)

This rancher have a dog?

LI CHEN

(nods)

Trusty. Reavers got the poor little fella, too. We found what was left of him where we found Clint...

Li Chen gestures towards a white birch tree standing in the field away from the woods.

LI CHEN (cont'd)

Strung up in that tree over there.

Its branches are covered in blood and rope. Clint and Trusty's bodies are gone.

SIMON (OS)

Captain, look at this.

Mal turns his attention to Simon, who is standing over the body of a cow.

SIMON (cont'd)

Look at these bite marks. They form a cone-shaped parabola. And the indentations clearly indicate that they were made by canines.

MAL

Translation, please?

SIMON

They're animal bites. Lupine... Dogs, or wolves. They're not human.

LI CHEN

These woods do have wolves.

MAL

(to Simon)

You sayin' it was wolves killed the rancher? Wolves tied him up in that tree?

SIMON

No, I'm not saying that at all. I'm just—

MAL

Son, let me tell you a thing or two about Reavers, 'cause they're trouble city boys like yourself don't come across. They don't walk like men. They don't talk like men. Don't kill like men. So I bet sure as Sihnon, that when they eat you, they don't bite like men.

SIMON

You brought me out here, Captain. I'm telling you these bite marks aren't human.

Simon, clearly displeased, stands up and moves to examine the next cow. Mal watches him for a moment, then turns to Li Chen.

MAL

Li? Where's the rancher's body?

LI CHEN

He was buried just today. With Trusty.

MAL

I see.

(to Simon)

What say you do a little grave diggin'?

Simon looks repulsed.

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – FRONT ROOM – LATE AFTERNOON

Kaylee is standing at the doorway with Zoe, watching Simon and Wash walk away with spades and flashlights in hand. Jayne follows them with his rifle, Vera, and a heat scanner. River and Ming Yu can be seen playing jacks in the FAMILY ROOM behind her.

KAYLEE

They'll be back 'fore sunset. Right?

ZOE

I reckon. Li Chen said the dirt was loose. 'Sides, Jayne'll be in the bell-tower watching the east flank. He'll keep an eye on them.

(beat)

In the mean time, best you three settle in for the night. Long as you stay inside and out of sight, you'll be safe.

KAYLEE

Right. Safe.

Zoe reaches into her coat, producing a small gun.

ZOE

You can take this if you'd like.

KAYLEE

I... I don't do well with guns. Maybe River...

They look in at River, who is sticking the jacks up her nose and making funny faces at Ming Yu.

ZOE

Not a good idea.

Kaylee nods. Zoe puts the gun back in her coat.

ZOE (cont'd)

You can expect one of us to come check in on you tonight.

(beat)

You gonna be all right?

KAYLEE

Yeah, we should be fine. Everything should be fine. Shouldn't it?

ZOE

Should.

Zoe looks up at the sky.

ZOE (cont'd)
Night's comin' on mighty fast. I best be heading back.

KAYLEE
All right. Be careful.

Zoe nods, then turns around and heads away from the house. Kaylee stands in the door, watching her go for a moment, and then shuts it, locking the deadbolt. She walks over to River and Ming Yu.

KAYLEE
Who's winning?

River blows out through her nose and the jacks tumble onto the floor.

RIVER
Nobody wins.

MING YU
She's lying, Kaylee! I'm winning.

KAYLEE
Are you? Good job!

Ming Yu smiles. It is clear that she and Kaylee have bonded.

MING YU
I always win. My Dad thinks I'm lucky. He's teaching me
Poker.

KAYLEE
Poker? Well now, that's a grown-up game.

MING YU
But I don't like it. It's boring. Sometimes, I get the queen
of diamonds, though, and that's fun 'cause the queen of
diamonds is my very favorite card 'cause she's the
prettiest. Don't you think she's pretty?

KAYLEE
I think so too.

RIVER
She's not pretty. She's bruised. Arms covered in them.
Red and black, red, black, red...

EXT. WHITEFALL - K-3 MINING POST - CEMETARY - DUSK - SAME TIME

Wash and Simon stand near Clint's grave, spades in hand. They pause to watch night falling.

RIVER (cont'd, VO)

...she lies on her face. Nose in the dirt. Flowers not in her hand anymore. They're on the ground. They fell. They all fell.

INT. CHURCH BELL TOWER - SAME TIME

Jayne stands in the tower, the bell behind him, watching Simon and Wash below and the surrounding woods. His eyes are wide. His hands tremble. He keeps checking Vera to make sure she's loaded.

RIVER (cont'd, VO)

They're on the ground. They fell. They all fell. Poker faces falling...

EXT. WHITEFALL - K-3 MINING POST - MAIN GATE - SUNSET - SAME TIME

The main gate of the mining post opens onto an empty field. At the edge of the field are the woods. A small road winds through the trees.

Zoe walks up to Mal, sitting in the hovermule behind the main gate. She takes her place at his side. Li Chen sits in a makeshift bunker, talking into a COM-LINK. He looks to Mal and Zoe. They nod. The Hovermule speeds away.

RIVER (cont'd, VO)

Can't hide them anymore. Game of deception. They came wearing masks...

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME - FRONT ROOM - SAME TIME

Close-in on River's face.

RIVER (cont'd)

They'll be wearing masks when they kill us.

Act Two

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – NIGHT

Kaylee sits on the couch, trying to comfort a crying Ming Yu. River sits on the floor on the other side of the room, her head in her hands.

MING YU

I should hide. Like my daddy told me to, in my hiding place, if the bad men come!

KAYLEE

Come on now, sweetie. We're gonna be okay.

MING YU

But she—

Ming Yu points at River.

MING YU (cont'd)

She said we are going to die!

KAYLEE

We ain't gonna die. I promise. Everything's shiny.

MING YU

But she said! She said—

KAYLEE

Ming Yu, I need you to listen to me real close. River don't always know what she's sayin'. 'S like the Cap'n said – she's a poet. Like the old Doctor Seuss books. You don't believe everything they say, right?

(Ming Yu shakes her head)

River didn't mean to scare you, right, River?

River remains unresponsive.

KAYLEE (cont'd)

Nothing bad's gonna happen to us, okay? We're just gonna stay here, have ourselves a shiny lil' party. You like parties?

Ming Yu nods.

MING YU

I like birthday parties. 'Specially protein cakes with strawberries on top, 'cause strawberries are my favorite.

KAYLEE

Me too! I love strawberries. So, tonight it's our party, you and me.

MING YU

(looking at River)

And her?

Kaylee looks to River – River sticks out her tongue - and back to Ming Yu, running her fingers through the child's hair.

KAYLEE

(to River)

She can come to the party if she plays nice.

River smiles.

MING YU

What about my daddy? Can he come?

KAYLEE

Your daddy's with my friends. They're going to protect us. They'll keep us safe.

RIVER

One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish.

(beat)

In a barrel.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – SAME TIME

Mal and Zoe sit in the hovermule near TWO MEN who are armed with their new weapons and positioned along a FENCE at the western edge of the town. One holds a COM UNIT.

MAL

Don't come runnin' till you hear the church bell. A gunshot don't mean nothin', with all the itchy trigger fingers about.

MAN #1

Won't that leave us exposed?

ZOE

Reavers don't think strategically. Don't think like normal men at all. If they come, they'll all come from one direction.

MAL

And if that direction is your way, give Li Chen a shout-
(points to com)
-and keep firin'.

The two men nod, and Mal and Zoe speed away in the hovermule.

ZOE

Looks like Li Chen's men're ready.

MAL

We'll see. They do what we told 'em to, and they'll be fine.

Mal looks at the treeline.

MAL (cont'd)

Anytime now, I reckon. Not that I know a thing about how a Reaver reckons.

ZOE

Maybe they won't come tonight. Maybe they got their fill?

MAL

No. I don't think so. Their meal got buried, remember?

EXT. WHITEFALL - K-3 MINING POST - CEMETERY - NIGHT - SAME TIME

Wash and Simon dig up Clint's grave. They are out of breath, faces smudged with dirt.

WASH

Why did Mal send us to do this job? I sit in a chair all day pushing buttons and switches. You organize little bottles of pills. I mean, look at us!

(he pauses; points the flashlight at his stomach)
We're all soft and pudgy!

The wind blows. Grass RUSTLES.

Wash peeks his head above the ground and shines the flashlight around them. The light dances off the tombstones.

JAYNE (OS)
(hollering from tower)
You hear that?!

WASH
Just the wind, Jayne! For the third time!

A noise like FAST BREATHING rises and is gone.

WASH (cont'd)
Wait a minute... You hear that, Simon?

SIMON
Hear what? I can't hear a thing above your panting.

Wash is frightened, continuing to shine his light.

WASH
That wasn't me.
(beat)
Okay, it was me, but I thought I heard something...

SIMON
Just keep digging. We're almost there.

INT. CHURCH BELL TOWER – SAME TIME

Jayne lifts the heat scanner to his eyes and looks towards the woods. He scans the area.

A small flash of color catches his eye.

JAYNE
(to himself)
Wha-what was that?

He returns to the spot. Nothing.

JAYNE (cont'd)
Gorramit, Jayne. It's nothin'.
(beat)
Yet.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – MAIN GATE – SAME TIME

Torches flicker from the gate and protective fence. A small group TOWNSPEOPLE watch the woods from behind the fence. Mal and Zoe pull up in the hovermule and climb out. Li Chen walks up to them.

MAL

Everyone's in position.

LI CHEN

Now what do we do?

ZOE

We wait.

MAL

Rancher's place was that-a-way.

(points beyond the gate)

They come, more'n likely they'll come here.

SNARLING and GNASHING noises echo from out of the woods. They grow louder.

MAL (cont'd)

Which would be right now...

(to townspeople)

Okay, people! They're here! No firing into the black!

Rifles CLICK and CLACK as the townspeople prepare to fight.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – CEMETERY – SAME TIME

Simon's spade hits wood with a CLICK. He finds the edge of the coffin with the spade and pries it open.

Throwing their spades up and out of the grave, Simon and Wash grunt as they open the wooden coffin lid. Simon covers his mouth with a cloth and shines his flashlight into the open coffin, revealing the maimed and partially consumed body of Clint beneath, nothing but a blur of red in the glow.

Wash manages a peek and averts his eyes.

WASH

Oh, yeah. That'd be a dead body. A dead, dead body.
Dead and gross. Kinda like how the holiday turkey looks
after-

SIMON

Wash! Please!

(inspecting the wounds)

Same bite marks as the cows in the field. Canine.

WASH

Okay. So can we go now?

He looks closer at Clint's shoulder.

SIMON

There's a knife wound in his shoulder.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – MAIN GATE – MOMENTS LATER

A FLARE flies through the night sky, hitting the gate six inches from Li Chen's head. The red sparks singe his hair. He stomps out the flare.

SHRIEKS and SCREAMS echo from the woods. Zoe shifts her stance. Li Chen takes aim at the shadows beneath the trees. The townspeople hunker down.

ZOE

Remember! Wait until they enter the-

Li Chen fires.

ZOE (cont'd)

-field.

The woods bloom with gunfire as bullets fly though the air.

MAL

Get down!

Mal grabs Li Chen, pulling him to the ground before a line of bullets strike the fencepost where he stood. They exchange a look.

MAL (cont'd)

(to the townspeople)

Aim for the flashes! After each burst, shift your position!

(to Li Chen)

Don't want to give your position away.

Li Chen nods.

MAL (cont'd, into com)

Jayne? Best start ringin' that bell.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – CEMETERY – SAME TIME

The sound of GUNFIRE is heard in the distance. Simon stops what he's doing. Both he and Wash look up out of the hole. The BELL behind them begins to ring.

SIMON
I've got to get back to River and Kaylee!

He drops the coffin lid.

SIMON (cont'd)
Boost me up. Hurry!

Wash laces his fingers together and helps boost Simon out of the grave. Simon grabs the spade in the pile of dirt and runs away.

Wash is left standing in the hole alone. He picks up his flashlight and shines it up.

WASH
Simon?
(beat)
Simon? Are you there?

Simon appears above the grave and holds out his hand to Wash.

SIMON
Sorry.

INT. CHURCH BELL TOWER – SAME TIME

Jayne slams the butt of his gun into the bell once more, the RINGING loud.

JAYNE
Ah! Gorramit!

He places his pinky finger in his ear and wriggles it around, in pain from the sound.

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – FRONT ROOM – SAME TIME

Kaylee, Ming Yu and River kneel on the couch, looking back out through the gaps between the boards covering the window behind it. The sound of GUNFIRE can be heard as the light plays in lines upon their faces.

MING YU
Will they come for us, Kaylee?

KAYLEE
No, sweetheart. They won't get this far-

A DARK SHAPE crosses outside the window, visible through the gaps between the boards. Heavy footsteps THUMP across the porch.

Ming Yu SCREAMS, and all three jump up and off the couch.

KAYLEE
It's probably just Zoe, checkin' on us. Like she said.

They look to the doorway. It rattles and shakes as something tries to get inside. Ming Yu shakes her head.

MING YU
I don't think so.

RIVER
I will not eat them in a box. I will not eat them with a fox...

KAYLEE
Zoe?

The door shakes harder. It CRACKS as it is struck. SHRIEKS of rage sound from behind it.

Ming Yu runs away into her bedroom.

KAYLEE
No! Wait!

The door shudders again, close to breaking open. River is unmoving.

RIVER
I will not eat green eggs and ham.

Kaylee drags River across the front room and they hide in the coat closet. Through the slats, Kaylee can see the front door as it bursts open.

RIVER
(whispering with a smile)
I will not eat them, Sam—

Kaylee covers River's mouth as five quick SHAPES streak into the house, SNARLING and GNASHING, followed by the slower steps of a LARGER FIGURE, barely visible through the slats in the closet door.

It wears tattered clothing, appearing to be made from leather but clearly not, stitched together in winding lines. Its gauntlets are grimy steel, and from them hang HUMAN HAIR and FINGER BONES.

It is a REAVER.

EXT. MINING CAMP WALL/GATE – SAME TIME

The battle continues as another flare fires through the sky. Gunfire flashes behind the fence and still within the treeline.

MAL

What are they waitin' for? Why they stayin' back? It ain't their way.

LI CHEN

Ain't their way? Long's we keep 'em back, who gives a <rat's ass>?

ZOE

No, Mal's right. Reavers like to look their victims in the eye when they go for the kill.

(looks to the woods)

This is something else.

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – MING YU'S BEDROOM

Ming Yu hides under her bed, looking out with frightened eyes, clutching a stuffed animal. SNARLING and THUMPING noise is heard outside in the front room, SHAPES rushing across the floor in her limited field of view. Into the threshold of her doorway steps the ARMORED BOOTS of the Reaver.

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – INSIDE COAT CLOSET – SAME TIME

Kaylee watches through the slats as the indistinct shapes streak about the front room. One SNARLS and SCRATCHES at the closet door.

Kaylee's BREATHS are quick and short. Her eyes are wide.

RIVER

He's so cute!

River laughs, and Kaylee has to cover her mouth once more.

A LONG BURST OF GUNFIRE sounds from Ming Yu's bedroom. Silence follows. River looks to a bullet hole in the closet, the light coming from it a beam.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – SAME TIME

Jayne runs towards the main gate, hears the BURST OF GUNFIRE behind him, and stops. His eyes are wide as he looks back towards the town, and he continues on to the main gate.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – SAME TIME

Simon and Wash hear the BURST OF GUNFIRE while running through the streets. Simon runs faster.

SIMON
River!

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – INSIDE COAT CLOSET – SAME TIME

Kaylee continues to cover River's mouth, wide eyes trying to see through the slats.

SIMON (OS)
(faint)
River!

An INHUMAN SHRIEK answers Simon's call, and the five shapes scamper out through the broken front door, followed by the thudding steps of the Reaver.

EXT. LI CHEN'S HOME – MOMENTS LATER

As Simon runs towards the house, he sees the five shapes scamper into the night. He rushes up the porch steps just as the Reaver steps out. The Reaver is cloaked in shadow, its features hidden, looming above Simon. Simon GASPS and lashes out with the spade.

The Reaver HISSES in pain, clutching its arm as Wash stumbles onto the scene.

WASH
It's a Reaver! <Holy crap in a handbasket>, it's a Reaver!

The Reaver smacks Simon, who topples to the ground, and it retreats with the others into the night.

WASH
Simon!

Simon scrambles to his feet and runs into the house.

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – FRONT ROOM

The front room is damaged, but empty.

SIMON
River! River! Kaylee!

RIVER (OS)
Simon!

Simon opens the closet. Kaylee rushes out and runs into Ming Yu's bedroom.

SIMON
Kaylee!

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – MAIN GATE – SAME TIME

Jayne rushes up to Mal, Zoe and Li Chen, other TOWNSPEOPLE arriving as well, as they fire from behind the main gate and fence into the surrounding woods.

JAYNE
Thought I heard gunfire, Mal!

MAL
(looking back)
Course you did! Now make some of your own!

JAYNE
No! From back in town!
(points back)
I heard it back there!

Li Chen stops firing, and looks back towards town.

LI CHEN
Ming Yu...

He abandons the front line and runs.

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – MING YU'S BEDROOM – SAME TIME

Kaylee stops at the bedroom door.

She looks down at Ming Yu's bed. A line of bullet holes are traced across its length. The bullet holes trail back towards the closet in the wall.

A pool of blood widens out from under the bed.

KAYLEE
No no no...

Simon enters the room. He sees what Kaylee sees.

He drops to his knees. Looks under the bed.

Ming Yu's wide, dark eyes look back at him. Her face is ghostly pale.

Simon reacts, falling back.

Act Three

INT. LI CHEN'S HOME – MING YU'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ming Yu stares back at Simon from under the bed.

MING YU
It's red... but it doesn't taste...

SIMON
Wash!

MING YU
...like strawberries...

Simon stands up as Wash rushes into the room.

SIMON
Help me...

Simon and Wash lift the bed off the floor and tip it over. Ming Yu is revealed beneath, so small in her growing pool of blood. Kaylee cries at the sight. River watches, tilting her head.

RIVER
Please get up. Don't lie down.

Simon hunkers down, inspecting Ming Yu's wounds.

WASH
What do you want me to do?

Simon takes Wash's hand and firmly places it over a hole in Ming Yu's neck.

SIMON
Compress here. We need to get her to the infirmary.
She's lost a lot of blood.
(picks up Ming Yu)
We haven't much time.

EXT. MINING CAMP WALL/GATE – SAME TIME

Mal, Zoe and Jayne, along with the townspeople, continue the firefight with the Reavers in the trees. Mal and Zoe stop firing, while Jayne releases another burst. The gun-flashes in the trees are gone.

MAL
Hold your fire! Hold your fire!

JAYNE
Why for? So's they can regroup?

ZOE
Captain's right, Jayne. They're gone.
(beat)
Can't believe my own eyes...

They watch the treeline. It is silent.

TOWNSPERSON (OS)
We beat 'em, men! We drove 'em off!

The townspeople CHEER, congratulating themselves. Mal and Zoe exchange a look.

JAYNE
What you so grim for, Mal? We won!

MAL
Reavers don't retreat.

JAYNE
Then what just happened? From where I'm standin', they turned tail and run.

MAL
They got what they came here for.
(to Zoe)
Take the mule. Find Li Chen.

EXT. LI CHEN'S HOME – MOMENTS LATER

Li Chen runs up the stairs of his home, his eyes wide. The house is empty. Items are in disarray. A trail of blood marks the floor.

He drops to his knees.

INT. SERENITY – INFIRMARY – SAME TIME

Ming Yu lies prone on the diagnostic bed, Simon standing over her. Kaylee stands across from him. She can't stop shaking. River sits in the corner, her eyes vacant, mouth ajar. Wash sits near the bed, his arm connected to Ming Yu's by a red line of plastic tubing. He looks woozy.

SIMON

Wash, you okay? We're nearing a liter here.

WASH

I'm fine. Just fix her. I'll do whatever it takes...

Kaylee watches, tears welling in her eyes, as Simon rubs iodine on Ming Yu's belly before taking a scalpel and making an incision near a bullet-hole.

KAYLEE

Oh, God...

She turns her head away, unable to look.

SIMON

Kaylee, I need you to open the drawer behind me, the second from the right, and give me the extractor.

KAYLEE

Simon, I don't think I can—

SIMON

Kaylee. Please.

Kaylee doesn't move. Simon looks up from his work for the first time and looks at Kaylee.

SIMON (cont'd)

She's dying.

Kaylee runs across the room and throws the drawer open. She pulls out an adrenaline syringe and lets it drop to the floor before grabbing the extractor. She hands it to Simon, hands shaking.

SIMON (cont'd)
Good. That's good, Kaylee. Now come stand here.

Kaylee stands beside Simon. She looks at Ming Yu's damaged insides and turns her head away. Simon doesn't react. He takes her hand.

SIMON (cont'd)
I'm going to take out one of the bullets, Kaylee. When I do, she's going to start bleeding, so I need you to pinch the artery. It won't hurt her. She's asleep.

KAYLEE
Simon. Simon, I can't look at that, I can't...

SIMON
It's okay. It's just like fixing a line in the engine. You just need to pinch. I'll guide your hand.

He gently but firmly directs her hand to hover inches above Ming Yu's body and grabs the extractor. Turning it on, he extracts a bullet, then quickly grabs Kaylee's hand and guides it to the bleeding artery.

KAYLEE
Oh, God.

SIMON
It's okay, Kaylee. Just keep applying pressure and—

A loud whine fills the room. Simon looks to the flatline on the monitor and bolts from the table.

KAYLEE
Simon!

SIMON
She's crashing.

He appears back at Kaylee's side, tearing open the adrenaline shot.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – LATER

The hovermule pulls into Serenity's cargo bay. Zoe is driving. Li Chen is riding shotgun and steps off the 'mule before it comes to a complete stop.

At the same time that Simon enters the cargo bay from the infirmary.

LI CHEN
Where is she? Where's my daughter?

SIMON
She's in the infirmary.

LI CHEN
Let me see her!

Li Chen starts to push his way forward, but Simon stops him.

LI CHEN (cont'd)
What? What's wrong? Is she okay?

Simon looks away, swallowing. He sighs and looks back to Li Chen.

SIMON
Before you go see her, sir, I must prepare you. Your daughter was injured very badly.

LI CHEN
How bad?

SIMON
She was shot in the abdomen. And the neck. I removed the bullets, and stopped the bleeding, but there was a lot of damage.

LI CHEN
Just tell me! How bad is it?

SIMON
She's stabilized, but critical. She's going to need further surgery. I think you should go sit with her before I start.

Li Chen walks past Simon into the infirmary. Wash steps out, watching Li Chen pass, drinking juice. Zoe steps up to Wash and touches his bandaged arm.

WASH
Are you okay, honey?

ZOE
Are you?

Wash doesn't answer. Can't. Simon looks at them and begins to return to the infirmary.

WASH
Simon, if she needs any more...

SIMON
I have enough now, I think. Thank you.

WASH
(insistent)
If she needs more...

SIMON
I'll come get you.

Simon enters the infirmary.

EXT. SERENITY – DAWN

Mal and Jayne walk towards the ship. Mal is at ease, but Jayne is at the ready, his gun raised. Zoe walks out to meet them.

INT. SERENITY – KAYLEE'S BUNK – LATER

Kaylee lies on her bed, facing the wall, as Mal climbs down the hatch into her bunk. He looks at her for a moment, unmoving, before crossing the room and sitting down next to her. Kaylee gasps as he puts one hand on her shoulder and the other on her head, his fingers idly combing her hair.

MAL
Shh. Easy, now, lil' Kaylee. It's just me.

KAYLEE
Cap'n? Cap'n... I... I couldn't...

MAL
Shh. It's okay now. I'm here, and I'm not gonna let nothin' bad happen to you, *dong ma?*

He rubs her shoulder as Kaylee nods, beginning to sob.

MAL
Kaylee... Kaylee... I know. I know you just wanna close those eyes an' cry those memories away, but you can't. Gotta be strong, okay? I need you to tell me what happened.

KAYLEE
(crying)
I can't...

MAL
Yes, you can.

Kaylee takes two deep breaths, calming her breathing. She rolls back and looks up into Mal's eyes.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – LATER

Mal marches down the cargo bay. His arms are at his sides. His face is set and determined. Wash is drinking colored fluid from a glass. Zoe responds to Mal's stance immediately, standing up tall, her eyes hardening.

MAL

Wash? You remember where you pulled the Crazy Ivan?

WASH

Roundabouts, yeah. Why?

Mal and Zoe exchange a look.

MAL

We need to find that ship.

WASH

Ahh... I could get us, probably within a mile... If I had a designated pilot...

MAL

Good. Prep Shuttle One.

(beat)

We're goin' huntin'.

INT. SHUTTLE ONE – BRIDGE – MORNING

Zoe, Wash and Jayne stand behind Mal as he pilots the ship. Wash is focused on a monitor, while the rest watch the woods pass underneath, Mal and Zoe at ease, while Jayne is wide-eyed and nervous.

MAL

Early bird gets the worm...

(beat)

How we doin', Wash?

WASH

Near as I can remember, we lost the Reavers right around here.

MAL

I'll start a search and rescue grid pattern.

JAYNE

Search and rescue? Sounds about right. 'Cept somebody's gonna have to rescue us...

ZOE

Everything's going to be fine, Jayne. You've got Vera.

JAYNE

Got more'n Vera.

(pats down his holster)

When it comes to Reavers, I'm the cheatin' type.

WASH

(looks outside)

Nothing but trees and more trees, Mal. Wait...

(points)

There. There it is.

The crew lean forward, looking out the window. Mal begins to land the shuttle.

MAL

There's a good spot. Right next to it.

JAYNE

Right next to it?!

(holds Vera tight)

I can't believe we're doin' this.

EXT. WHITEFALL – REAVER SHIP CRASH SITE – MORNING

The crashed Reaver ship sticks out of the earth at a low angle, all sharp angles. It is charred and burned, its hull ripped and torn. Debris marks the path it took through the woods. Trees have begun to grow back.

The shuttle lands beside the Reaver ship.

INT. SHUTTLE ONE – MAIN DECK

Mal and Zoe check their weapons, Wash standing near Zoe. Jayne looks back, out the cockpit window. Mal opens the shuttle door, which lowers with a HUM.

MAL

Standard clean and sweep formation.

ZOE

Yes, sir.

WASH

Right. Clean and sweep. I'll bring the broom.

ZOE

You're not comin'.

WASH

Oh yes, I am! I've watched a few horror holos in my time. Never split up. You split up, you become corpsefied and gross. Especially if you're the comic relief.

ZOE

Fine.

(sighs)

Stay close to me.

MAL

Let's do this.

INT. CRASHED REAVER SHIP – HALLWAY

Through a HOLE IN THE HULL, Zoe walks inside the ship, sweeping the area with her gun. Their path is not level, tilted up and slightly to the side.

Zoe takes the lead, followed closely by Wash, Mal, and Jayne at the rear. Smaller holes light their path down the hallway, beams of light amidst the shadows. Their boots CLANG across the metal floor.

ZOE

Clear.

WASH

(whispering)

That smell? That smell what I think it is?

JAYNE

Sure ain't me.

ZOE

It's getting stronger.

WASH

And what is that noise?

They quiet, listening. FLUTTERING can be heard, TICKING against steel.

JAYNE

What in the ruttin' hell is that?

ZOE
This way...

Zoe continued forward. Wash covers his nose. Mal inspects his surroundings.

JAYNE
Well don't go towards it...

The crew exits the hall into:

INT. CRASHED REAVER SHIP – BUTCHER ROOM

WASH
Wuo Duh Tian Ab...

The room was once an infirmary. The bed is now a butcher's block. Hooks and chains hang from the ceiling. Dried blood paints the walls. All manner of implements – some medical, some clearly not – litter the floor and tables.

The hull is breached in a few places, backlighting the scene. The black shapes of CARRION BIRDS writhe atop the bed, hiding what lay beneath.

Mal walks forward and shoos the birds away. They CAW and SHRIEK as they fly away through the holes in the hull.

A skeleton lay strapped to the bed, its bones all but picked clean.

Wash backs away from it, and runs into one of the chains. He jumps back, the chains RINGING.

MAL
This's been here awhile.
(touches the skeleton)
Bones're dry.

And Mal is off again, walking faster and with purpose.

JAYNE
What's that mean?

ZOE
Keep movin'.

INT. CRASHED REAVER SHIP – CARGO BAY

Mal and Zoe enter first, guns raised. They lower them.

MAL
<There really is no god>.

Wash and Jayne step behind them. In the middle of the cargo bay is a pile of burnt bodies. There is no evidence of clothes, or weapons. They are charred black to the bones.

JAYNE
They burn 'em after they et em'?

Mal steps close to the pile of corpses. Kicks some bones with his boot.

MAL
No. They don't.
(looks to Zoe)
They found them. They were all dead already. They stripped them of all their clothes. Their weapons. And they burned what was left to destroy the evidence.

JAYNE
I don't get it, Mal.

Zoe nods at Mal.

ZOE
We got what we came here for. Move out!

The group retreat towards a larger hole in the hull, not needing to go back the way they came.

JAYNE
'Bout time we got outta here.

EXT. WHITEFALL – CRASHED REAVER SHIP – MOMENTS LATER

Mal, Zoe, Wash and Jayne exit the Reaver ship. All of them look up to the sound of SNARLING and BARKING. They are surrounded by a dozen REAVERS.

One Reaver in particular holds back FIVE DOGS on leashes, the arm holding them dressed in a gauntlet decorated with human hair and finger bones, as well as wrapped in a fresh, clean BANDAGE where Simon slashed him with the spade.



Act Four

EXT. WHITEFALL – CRASHED REAVER SHIP – MORNING

Mal, Zoe, Wash, and Jayne stand in front of the Reaver ship. Jayne has his gun up, eyes wide and panicking, as he retreats towards the hole in the hull. Mal and Zoe stand calm. Mal reaches out and grabs Jayne's shirt, stopping him.

MAL

Jayne. Stay.

The SNARLING from the dogs is hungry and furious; the Reaver PACKMASTER can barely hold them back. The Reavers surrounding them are silent.

JAYNE

Why we just standin' here? We're gonna get et by
Reavers!

MAL

(lets go of Jayne)

Ever seen a Reaver cover up a cut before?

JAYNE

(looks to Reaver with bandage)

No.

MAL

They ain't the puppy-lovin' type, neither.

(beat)

These ain't Reavers.

The BARKING stops.

PATIENCE (OS)

That you, Mal?

From out of the trees steps Patience, standing near the Reaver Packmaster with the dogs. An old scar marks the Packmaster's cheek. No self-inflicted wounds are visible. He looks to Patience and smiles.

PATIENCE (cont'd)

(to Mal)

Should've figured it'd be you.

MAL

You plan on shootin' me again? Just like you did Li Chen's
little girl?

PATIENCE

I don't know what you're talkin' about, Mal. That's a
damn shame if it's true. If he'd accepted my offer, maybe
it wouldn't have happened.

JAYNE

You're right, Mal. They ain't Reavers...

Jayne's wide eyes narrow as he looks at the men dressed as Reavers surrounding them. One of the "Reavers" wears spectacles. Another smokes a cigar. Their eyes are cold. Jayne clenches his jaw and grips Vera tight.

JAYNE (cont'd)

They're worse.

PATIENCE

In fact, Mal, if you'd never come here, the Reavers
wouldn't have crashed. And I wouldn't have seen 'em
crash. Or found this ship here, with all of 'em dead.

(beat)

Mostly dead anyway. My men here finished 'em off easy
enough. Took their clothes and weapons. Started puttin'
pressure on folk who just wouldn't see things my way.

ZOE

(whispering)

Just give me the word, sir.

MAL

And what way is that, Patience? You're a wolf in sheep's
clothin'? 'Cept those clothes your men is wearin' ain't
made of sheepskin!

PATIENCE

This is my little world, Mal. You said so yourself.

Mal draw his gun, and shoots one of the men trying to flank them on the left. He falls into the dirt and dust.

MAL

<Kill 'em all>

All hell breaks loose. Mal, Zoe, and Jayne begin firing at Patience's henchmen. Another three drop dead in the trees.

Patience takes cover. The return fire from her nine remaining men is fierce.

ZOE

Fall back! Into the ship!

Zoe covers them as Mal, Jayne and Wash retreat into the ship. Another two men drop in the woods.

AT THE CARGO BAY HOLE

Mal returns fire as Zoe retreats into the ship.

ZOE
(to Wash)
Stay close to me.

WASH
Can I have a gun, please?

JAYNE
(drawing a pistol)
Here. Try her on for size!

Jayne throws the pistol to Wash just as a GRENADE rolls through the door.

MAL
Grenade!

Zoe grabs Wash and tackles him, covering him. Jayne's pistol hits the floor. Mal and Jayne leap behind the corpse-pile. The grenade EXPLODES.

BACK OUTSIDE

The "Reaver" Packmaster releases the dogs, looking towards the dust billowing out of the cargo bay hole.

PACKMASTER
Get 'em. Eat 'em up!

The dogs race towards the ship, SNARLING and BARKING.

BACK INSIDE

The cargo bay is hazy with smoke and black dust from the charred bones. Much of the corpse pile has been blasted into disarray.

Zoe, COUGHING, rolls off Wash. They blink.

WASH
Thanks, honey. But you know, I prefer to be on-

The cargo bay ECHOES with BARKING as the dogs rush in. They center on Zoe.

WASH (cont'd)
I've seen what they can do...

ZOE
Bet you they ain't <neutered>...

She shoots one of them – it drops with a YELP – before the second is on her. She blocks the attack with her shotgun. The dog's jaws latch onto the gun, shaking its head back and forth. Two others SNAP at her feet. She kicks them away. The last looks at Wash, GROWLING.

Patience's six remaining henchmen appear at the hole, firing inside at Mal and Jayne behind the corpse-pile.

Wash looks around, his wide eyes finding a BONE. He picks it up. He WHISTLES.

WASH
Hey boy!
(waves the bone)
Hey boy, you want this?!

The dog approaching Wash snaps to attention, watching the bone. Wash picks up another bone. WHISTLES again.

The dogs attacking Zoe stop, looking up at Wash waving the bones. Wash runs back towards the hall. The dogs scamper after him.

WASH
Come and get the bone! Come on!

Wash reaches the:

INT. CRASHED REAVER SHIP – BUTCHER ROOM

The dogs are close behind, BARKING WILDLY. Wash throws the first bone into the room, and the first two dogs chase after it. He catches the attention of the last two.

WASH
Go get it!

He throws the last bone. The two dogs race by. Wash slams the door to the infirmary closed. He sighs with relief. The sound of GUNFIRE continues.

ZOE (OS)
Wash! Get back to the shuttle!

Wash retreats back down the hallway.

INT. CRASHED REAVER SHIP – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Zoe has joined Mal and Jayne behind the corpse pile, exchanging shots with the henchmen coming through the cargo bay hole.

Another grenade EXPLODES in front of the pile, sending bits of skull and bones flying.

The henchmen make their move, running inside.

MAL

Now, Jayne.

Jayne smiles, pulls the pin on his own grenade, and lobs it over the pile. It EXPLODES in the midst of the henchmen.

Amidst the dust and smoke, the Packmaster with the bandaged arm struggles to rise. He shakes his head, looking down. He is covered with spatters of blood – the remains of his henchmen friends. He finally gets to his feet.

From out of the smoke a gun flashes. The bullet tears into his other arm. Another slams into his thigh. He fires back, retreating into the hallway. More shots are fired at him, from Mal, from Zoe. The bullets RING off the walls.

He sees the door to the infirmary. He pulls it open. Steps inside and slams it shut.

He backs into the room, BREATHING HARD, looking at the door, then at the chains hanging around him.

The dogs appear from all sides, curious and surrounding him. They have bits of the bones in their mouths.

PACKMASTER

Hey boys! There you are!

(spits blood on the floor)

This where you ran off to?

The dogs drop their bones. They sniff and smell. Blood is in the air. Their hungry eyes center on him. One licks its chops.

The Packmaster wipes blood off his arm, looking at it.

PACKMASTER

No...

The dogs GROWL and SNARL up at him. He backs away, stumbling into the table. He falls to the floor.

PACKMASTER

No!

The dogs rush in, all SNAPPING jaws. The Packmaster SCREAMS.

EXT. WHITEFALL – WOODS – MOMENTS LATER

Patience runs away through the trees, looking back over her shoulder.

From above, there comes the sound of TURBINES and RUSHING WIND. A shadow the shape of Shuttle One falls over her. Bullets strike the earth in her path, sending up dust at her feet.

She stops and looks up. Raises her hands above her head.

INT. WHITEFALL – JAIL – DAY

Patience is alone in her cell. Light streams in from beyond the bars, through which we can see the GALLows being prepared.

Mal walks up to the cell door. Patience looks up.

PATIENCE

Malcolm Reynolds. Come to kick an old woman when she's down?

MAL

No. You'll get what's comin' to you soon enough.

Patience looks out at the gallows.

PATIENCE

'Spose I will.

Beat. Mal grabs the bars.

MAL

How could you do it? You and your men... the things you've done...

PATIENCE

Is it really that much of a mystery, Mal? Same reason any of us do what we do.

(beat)

You have Serenity. That's your little world. Mine's Whitefall. 'S hard work keepin' it that way.

MAL

Well, now your little world is this little cell. For a while.

PATIENCE

You just gonna let them lynch me? Without a fair trial?
What happened to all your high morals and fancy talk
about right and wrong?

MAL

Like I told you last time we met. I do the job. I get paid.

Starts to walk away.

MAL (cont'd)

Now if you'll excuse me, I have a funeral to attend.

EXT. WHITEFALL – CEMETERY – DAY

The town is gathered together, a large group of men, women and children mostly dressed in black, along with the crew of Serenity minus Kaylee. Simon, Zoe, Wash, and Jayne stand in the crowd. Jayne crosses his arms over his chest. Simon's eyes are on the ground. River looks at her brother. Wash and Zoe hold each other.

Li Chen stands next to a fresh grave, the hole empty. Mal stands beside him.

The crowd parts as four miners carry a child-sized casket to the grave.

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN wearing a long skirt and Shepherd's collar steps out of the crowd and stands over the grave. Everyone, including the crew, bows their heads as she begins to lead a prayer. Mal stares at the casket.

The four miners lower the casket into the ground with ropes. Li Chen steps forward and sets a white lily on the casket; touches the casket as it lowers; hunkers down to keep his hand on it as long as possible as it drops into the grave. His hand separates. He begins to weep.

Mal steps forward and places his hand on Li Chen's shoulder.

INT. WHITEFALL – SALOON – LATER

Jayne receives his drinks on the house, the Bartender filling his shot glass.

JAYNE

(to himself)

Shouldn't a ran when I heard that shot...

(to Bartender)

'Nother one.

INT. SERENITY – INFIRMARY – SAME TIME

Simon cleans up the infirmary, putting his implements and supplies away. CLANGING NOISE drifts in from the cargo bay. River stands in the room with Simon, looking at the floor, and the operating table.

RIVER

I can still see it. Red fishes. Swimming across the floor.
Wet rags won't wipe them away.

Simon looks at her, concerned.

RIVER (cont'd)

They fell down. But they never fell down...

EXT. WHITEFALL – SERENITY – CARGO BAY RAMP – DAY

Li Chen oversees the loading of Serenity with CRATES of RAW MATERIALS from the mines. FORKLIFTS carry the crates up the ramp and into the cargo bay. Mal steps up to Li Chen.

LI CHEN

Trade's been slow ever since Whitefall got the reputation
of bein' Reaver territory.

(beat)

I suppose trade'll pick up now.

MAL

I can handle it from here, Li Chen. Go on home.

Li Chen falters, but remains focused.

LI CHEN

Home? No. I've got to see this through. Deal's a deal.

(waves the forklift in)

Thank you for coming, Mal. No one else would.

MAL

Reckon it might've been best if I'd never come here in the
first place.

LI CHEN

It's not your fault. Please... It's not your fault that
monster killed my little girl. That blame belongs to me. If
I'd just... All she wanted was a cut of the mine, and if I'd
just...

Li Chen turns away.

MAL

Folk like Patience... Their hearts're an empty black nothiness that can never get full. She'd a just kept takin' and takin' 'til there was nothin' left.

LI CHEN

But I would still have Ming Yu...
(beat)
That would've been enough.

Mal is silent. They watch the crates being loaded.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – LATER

Wash sits in the pilot's chair. He flips three switches and Serenity springs to life, lights blinking, an electronic hum filling the air. Behind him stands Zoe, her face drawn. She is silent.

WASH

You were right.

Zoe looks confused, but still doesn't speak. She steps forward. Wash turns around and pulls her onto his lap.

WASH (cont'd)

I really thought that if we settled down dirt side that we'd be safe, that things would be safe for our daughter... or... our son, but...

Zoe silences him with a smile.

ZOE

You want a girl?

WASH

I want her to be just like her mother.

(beat)

Of course, if we had a boy I'd want him to be just like his mother, too. Looks and everything. Though, I'd hope he inherits something from me. Maybe my ability to grow a moustache...

Zoe laughs, curling her hand around her husbands.

ZOE

I want a girl, too. Or a boy. Or both.

Wash kisses her forehead. Zoe smiles, but her eyes are once more far away.

ZOE (cont'd)
About me bein' right.
(beat)
Maybe...

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Serenity's engine is spinning. Kaylee is sitting on the ground beside it, playing with some wires when Simon walks in. It is clear from her expression that she hears him enter, doesn't acknowledge him. Simon stands in the doorway for a moment, clearly nervous. He clears his throat.

SIMON
I... I didn't see you at the funeral.

KAYLEE
That's 'cause I didn't come.
(beat)
Don't seem appropriate for the person who let a child –
let Ming Yu – die to come to her funeral.

Simon sighs, stepping into the engine room, sitting down next to her.

SIMON
Kaylee...

He takes her hands into his, forcing her to stop playing with the wires. She looks at him.

SIMON (cont'd)
This isn't your fault. You couldn't save her, and neither could I. But we tried.

KAYLEE
Did I?

She stands up, tears welling in her eyes.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
I told Ming Yu I would take care of her. I told her she'd be safe. I promised her!

SIMON
Kaylee...

KAYLEE
You don't understand, Simon. When the Reavers came, I froze. I... I couldn't...

Kaylee turns away. Simon stands up to comfort her, but she moves away, crossing the room.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
(quietly)
Get out, Simon.

SIMON
This wasn't your fault. You did what you could.

KAYLEE
I said leave!

SIMON
Kaylee, sometimes there's nothing you can do to protect the ones you care about. Sometimes you are powerless. It kills you inside, but... I gave up everything for River, and...

Kaylee snorts, turning around, her sadness switching to anger.

KAYLEE
River! If River hadn't of just stood there like some sorta statue...

SIMON
(calm)
If River had run with you, all of you would have died in that bedroom.

Kaylee holds Simon's gaze, her face made of stone.

KAYLEE
Guess it's a good thing you can't fix her, then.

Simon looks at her, stunned. Kaylee doesn't flinch.

The engine turns faster. Simon backs out of the room and leaves her.

Kaylee turns back to the engine, wiping the tears from her eyes, regret filling them.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal stands behind Wash.

MAL
Got enough fuel to make Greenleaf?

WASH
Should.

MAL
Good. Cause we've got a heavy burden to carry.

EXT. WHITEFALL – K-3 MINING POST – GALLows – DAY

Patience watches Serenity lift off and fly overhead. A NOOSE is around her neck. A SHOUTING CROWD can be heard just below the sound of Serenity's ENGINES.

PATIENCE
I'll see you in <Hell>, Mal...

Patience drops out of view. The ROPE goes taut.

Serenity takes to the skies.

BLACKOUT